
PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT:**Jeff Lustgarten, 323/466-3445****Cheryl Collier, 213/236-1942****June 8, 2007**

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AIR CRISIS DETAILED AT SCAG RETREAT

LAKE ARROWHEAD, CA – Local elected leaders and air quality regulators met to discuss the seriousness of the growing air quality crisis facing the region at a special retreat. The group renewed calls for federal and state policymakers to take emergency actions to reduce emissions associated with goods movement activities. Today's call to action comes on the heels of a resolution adopted by the Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) Regional Council in May to urge that a state of emergency be declared for the area.

"We are seeking to give our federal and state leaders a wake-up call to address this very serious health crisis we are facing," said San Bernardino County Supervisor and SCAG President Gary Ovitt. "The time to act is now, and I strongly urge our partners in Washington and Sacramento to recognize the seriousness of this air quality and public health crisis and act immediately."

"Given the severity of what we're facing today, dramatic changes in technology and the way we approach mobility will be needed to ensure that everyone can have clean air," said Dr. Barry Wallerstein, Executive Director of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD).

The AQMD – which oversees air quality policy for portions of Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties and all of Orange County – has long faced serious challenges in meeting federal standards for ozone and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), one of the primary pollutants associated with diesel emissions.

(more)

As the nation's primary gateway for the movement of goods, Southern California derives significant economic benefits from hosting the nation's two largest ports and an ever-growing logistics industry. However, the region is also subjected to serious public health consequences because of the air pollution produced by these activities. A recent California Air Resources Board study found that the South Coast Air Basin suffers approximately 5,400 premature deaths, 2,400 hospitalizations, 140,000 cases of asthma and 980,000 lost work hours each year as a result of exposure to diesel-related pollution. Residents living in the South Coast Air Basin are exposed to 82 percent of the state-wide exposure and 52 percent of the national exposure of PM2.5 above the federal standard. One of the primary emission sources of PM2.5 in the region are goods movement activities from heavy duty diesel trucks, locomotives and ocean-going vessels.

Identifying solutions to this challenge is further complicated by the fact that more than 80 percent of the emissions associated with these pollutants are under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the California Air Resources Board.

SCAG and AQMD will work closely together in the coming weeks to bring further attention and action to the growing air quality crisis. The two agencies will travel to Washington, D.C. later this month to meet with U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters and congressional leaders regarding the impact of mobile sources on Southern California's air quality. AQMD is working with Sen. Barbara Boxer and Rep. Hilda Solis to author legislation that will reduce emissions from ocean-going vessels.

Both agencies will engage in an ongoing public education campaign to inform the public about the severity of the air crisis and what actions are needed to resolve the matter. Finally, a major "summit" is being planned in Long Beach for Friday, July 6, at which congressional and state leaders will hear directly from Southern California's local elected leadership and health experts about the seriousness of the crisis, as well as to seek specific remedies.